

KDHE Supervises Asbestos Cleanup at Farmland Plant in Lawrence

A half-century of fertilizer manufacturing in Lawrence came to an end three years ago with the closing and mothballing of the Farmland Industries ammonia fertilizer plant in Lawrence, but protection of the Douglas County environment is pressing forward thanks to the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE).

KDHE is supervising a process that began in late July with removing approximately 16,600 linear feet of friable asbestos from pipe surfaces and 8,500 square feet of friable asbestos from tanks, vessels and exchangers at the abandoned Farmland plant. The estimated project cost for removal and cleanup is \$500,000.



The Farmland Industries facility is located on the east city limits of Lawrence.

Asbestos Removal and Maintenance, Inc (ARMI), Wichita, a KDHE certified asbestos removal contractor, is performing the abatement work, which will take several months to complete. Farmland is selling off the equipment either for re-use or scrap and therefore must take off the friable asbestos so the components or metal can be safely transported within regulatory compliance.

Friable asbestos is defined by U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as “any material containing more than one percent asbestos, and that can be crumbled or reduced to powder by hand pressure. It may also include previously non-friable material which becomes broken or damaged by mechanical force.” The potential public health hazards associated with disturbing friable asbestos is fibers becoming airborne, being inhaled and becoming lodged inside the body.



Controlling the cleanup environment keeps friable asbestos from leaking out into the atmosphere.

Pipes and surfaces are being removed wet so asbestos workers minimize air and waste contamination health hazards. When the materials are removed, they are

immediately encapsulated in plastic and transported to the Jefferson and Douglas County landfills.

By agreement with Farmland Industries, KDHE controls a \$7 million fund to clean up the ground water contamination and asbestos removal from the site. The main goal of the fund is to maintain and remediate the property according to environmental regulations.



Before the property can be used again for any purpose, the contaminated soil and groundwater must be remediated and cleaned up. One of the major problems encountered at the site is the heavy nitrate contamination in filtration water

Indoor (left) and outdoor (above) asbestos removal will require several months of work.

sources at the northern end of the plant, the presence of

chromium in the center of the plant and the presence of asbestos throughout the plant.

KDHE will continue working with the facility to oversee the cleanup of these contaminants and ensure proper procedures and regulations are followed.